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Economic and Social Council

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Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Seventieth session
Agenda item 3(b)

Resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

70/5. Strengthening regional cooperation and capacity for enhanced trade and investment in support of sustainable development

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific,

Recalling the 2005 World Summit Outcome[1] and the United Nations Millennium Declaration[2] as well as other relevant declarations adopted at international summits and conferences, and relevant General Assembly resolutions[3] emphasizing the role and importance of trade and investment as engines for economic growth and development and the role and importance of the private sector, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, in this regard,

Recalling in particular General Assembly resolution 66/288 adopting the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012, entitled "The future we want",[4] which distinguishes the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainability and their interlinkages, recognizes the regional dimension and role of the regional commissions in promoting sustainable development and acknowledges that the active participation of the private sector can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including through the important tool of public-private partnerships,

Recalling the Almaty Declaration and Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries[5] adopted by the International Ministerial

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1 General Assembly resolution 60/1.

2 General Assembly resolution 55/2.

3 See, for instance, General Assembly resolutions 64/192, 64/223, 65/142, 65/175, 66/185, 67/202 and 67/225.

4 General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex.

5 See *Report of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 28 and 29 August 2003* (A/CONF.202/3), annexes I and II.

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Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation, held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from 25 to 29 August 2003, and taking note of the Vientiane Consensus[6] adopted by the Euro-Asian Final Regional Review of the Almaty Programme of Action on 7 March 2013, all of which emphasize the importance of trade, trade facilitation and investment for the development of landlocked developing countries and the need for technical assistance in these areas,

Recalling also the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020[7] adopted by the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 9 to 13 May 2011, which recognizes the important role of partnerships with the private sector for promoting entrepreneurship, generating employment and investment, increasing revenue potential, developing new technologies and enabling high, sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth in least developed countries, and the key role of good governance at all levels and an enabling business environment in this respect,

Recalling further its resolution 69/3 and the adoption of the Bangkok Declaration on the United Nations Development Agenda for Asia-Pacific Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, which recognizes the regional dimensions of development and the need for strong and additional commitments and actions with regard to official development assistance, debt, trade and technology transfer on mutually agreed upon terms,

Recalling the Bangkok Declaration on Regional Economic Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific adopted by the Ministerial Conference on Regional Cooperation and Integration in Asia and the Pacific,[8] held in Bangkok from 17 to 20 December 2013, which resolved to work together to pursue enhanced regional economic cooperation and integration in Asia and the Pacific, including in the area of moving towards the formation of an integrated market,

Recalling also its resolution 62/6 on managing globalization through strengthened regional cooperation in trade and investment,

Recognizing that trade and investment continue to be major driving forces for economic growth, poverty eradication, disaster risk reduction and achievement of internationally agreed development goals,

Recognizing also the need for developing countries to balance sources of economic growth to enhance resilience and, in this regard, the need for them to diversify markets and tradable products and services, with due regard to enhancing trade and investment among themselves,

Noting that businesses, including private sector businesses, are principal agents for conducting trade and investment,

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[6] See E/ESCAP/69/1, annex.

[7] See *Report of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, Istanbul, Turkey, 9-13 May 2011* (A/CONF.219/7) (United Nations publication, Sales No. 11.II.A.1), chap. II.

[8] See E/ESCAP/70/7.

Recognizing with appreciation the increased engagement of the private sector in promoting sustainable development through the ESCAP Business Advisory Council and its Sustainable Business Network,

Recognizing the need for improved market access and reducing at- and behind-the-border barriers to trade and investment and, generally, barriers encountered by businesses, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, in the overall conduct of their commercial activities, including trade and investment,

Recalling its resolution 68/3 on enabling paperless trade and the cross-border recognition of electronic data and documents for sustainable intraregional trade facilitation,

Emphasizing that knowledge and innovation are important determinants of increased productivity and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, and that there is a need for the development of science-based knowledge and technology, particularly agricultural technology, including through the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms,

Emphasizing also the need for trade and investment to be sustainable, including the need to encourage businesses to adopt and practise internationally recognized principles of responsible business practices, including those of the United Nations Global Compact, in order for trade and investment to contribute to sustainable development,

Recognizing the need for enhanced capacity of Governments and businesses to expand trade and investment in support of sustainable development,

Recognizing also that regional cooperation is essential in enhancing trade and investment, in particular among developing countries,

Reaffirming the importance of a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system for enhanced trade and investment flows,

Recognizing the progress made in the multilateral trade negotiations under the Doha Round with the adoption of the Bali Ministerial Declaration and decisions by the Ninth World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, held in Bali, Indonesia, on 7 December 2013,

Also recognizing the potential contribution of regional trade and investment agreements to enhanced trade and investment flows and that such agreements are important modalities for regional cooperation and can be building blocks of the multilateral trading system, without prejudice to member States' commitment to, implementation of and participation in past, present and planned international agreements and negotiations in trade and investment within the context of the World Trade Organization and the multilateral trading system,

Having considered the report of the Committee on Trade and Investment on its third session,[9]

1. *Encourages* member States:

(a) To strengthen national and regional initiatives, programmes, projects and other efforts to promote sustainable development of the Asia-

[9] E/ESCAP/70/9.

Pacific region through enhanced trade and investment, and to, wherever appropriate, endeavour to strengthen regional cooperation among member States, the United Nations development system and other development partners in promoting sustainable development through enhanced trade and investment;

(b) To allocate the required financial resources for the purpose outlined in paragraph 1(a) above and the paragraph below;

2. *Designates,* without prejudice to the outcome of the ongoing reforms of the conference structure of ESCAP and within the framework of the overall terms of reference of the Committee on Trade and Investment, as contained in Commission resolution 69/1, the Committee on Trade and Investment as the appropriate body to closely monitor and guide the directions and requests contained in paragraphs 1 above and 4 below and draft regional action plans on specific trade and investment issues for implementation by national Governments and the secretariat alike, subject to a periodic review by a conference at the ministerial level;

3. *Notes* the support of the Committee on Trade and Investment[10] on the establishment of a permanent bureau and its request to the secretariat to undertake a feasibility study on such a bureau and to prepare draft terms of reference of the bureau for review by member States;

4. *Requests* the Executive Secretary:

(a) To study the feasibility of convening every four years, starting in 2016, a conference at the ministerial level to review recent developments and adopt regional action plans in the area of trade and investment and other related areas[11] for implementation by Governments of ESCAP members and associate members and by the secretariat of ESCAP, and to submit to the Committee on Trade and Investment at its next session a report with recommendations on the convening of a ministerial-level conference;

(b) To expand policy-oriented and evidence-based analytical work in the area of trade and investment for sustainable development in the ESCAP region, including in order to support the normative work of ESCAP;

(c) To effectively disseminate the findings of its research and analysis through appropriate websites and publications, in particular through the annual *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report*;

(d) To continue analysis of preferential trade agreements, including through the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Agreements Database;

(e) To expand technical assistance and to encourage ESCAP regional members, and where appropriate, regional associate members, in building their human and institutional capacity, in particular in the following areas:

(i) Undertaking evidence-based policy-oriented research and analysis in the area of trade and investment, including research with a view towards identifying modalities for the consolidation of regional trade agreements as building blocks of the multilateral trading system;

(ii) Negotiating, concluding and implementing trade and investment agreements, including accession to the World Trade Organization of

[10] E/ESCAP/70/9, para. 12.

[11] These other related areas are covered by the subprogramme on trade and investment and comprise: business and development, including responsible business practices; technology transfer; and sustainable agricultural mechanization.

those countries not yet members of that organization, upon request of the member countries;

(iii) Formulating and implementing policies in support of trade, investment and business development within the context of overall national sustainable development goals;

(iv) Formulating and implementing policies in support of trade facilitation, promotion and facilitation of foreign direct investment, strengthening national capacities in science, technology and innovation; strengthening the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, with special focus on such enterprises in rural areas and those owned or managed by women or youth; and the adoption of responsible business practices by businesses in accordance with the principles of the Global Compact and other internationally recognized principles of responsible business practices;

(f) To continue the promotion of regional cooperation with a view to achieve higher levels of regional economic integration through enhanced intraregional trade, investment and technology flows for sustainable development, including through the following modalities:

(i) Expanding membership and deepening and broadening commitments within the framework of the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement while studying the feasibility of strengthening the linkages of that Agreement with other regional trade agreements;

(ii) Strengthening the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade and its activities;

(iii) Strengthening the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific and its activities;

(iv) Strengthening the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology, with focus on its capacity to promote the development of national and subnational innovation systems and the transfer of technology, inter alia, environmentally sustainable and renewable energy technologies on mutually agreed upon terms, including with a view to supporting the existing regional technology bank;[12]

(v) Strengthening the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization, including its capacity to establish and service the Asian and Pacific Network for Testing of Agricultural Machinery and promote the adoption and implementation at the national level of sustainable agricultural mechanization strategies;

(g) To encourage public-private partnerships and dialogue on issues related to trade and investment for sustainable development through such modalities as the Asia-Pacific Business Forum, the Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum, and the ESCAP Business Advisory Council and its Sustainable Business Network;

(h) In undertaking trade and investment capacity-building assistance, to accord priority to the special needs of least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, countries with economies in transition and small island developing States;

(i) To take all necessary measures to mobilize the funds required for the implementation of the above-mentioned requests from within existing resources, supplemented as necessary by voluntary contributions and through partnerships with entities, including from the Asian Development Bank and the private sector;

[12] General Assembly resolution 67/220, para. 21.

(j) To strengthen cooperation with relevant regional and global partner organizations, to the extent possible, in the implementation of the above-mentioned requests with a view to utilizing resources efficiently, achieving synergies in outputs and impacts and avoiding unnecessary duplication of work;

(k) To report to the Commission at its seventy-second session on the implementation of the present resolution.

Seventh plenary meeting
8 August 2014